SCHERZO IN E MINOR

Op. 16, No. 2

By

FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND GLOSSARY

REVISED EDITION WITH FINGERING, PEDALING, PHRASING, AND INSTRUCTIVE ANNOTATIONS ON FORM AND STRUCTURE, AND INTERPRETATION

By ERNST C. KROHN

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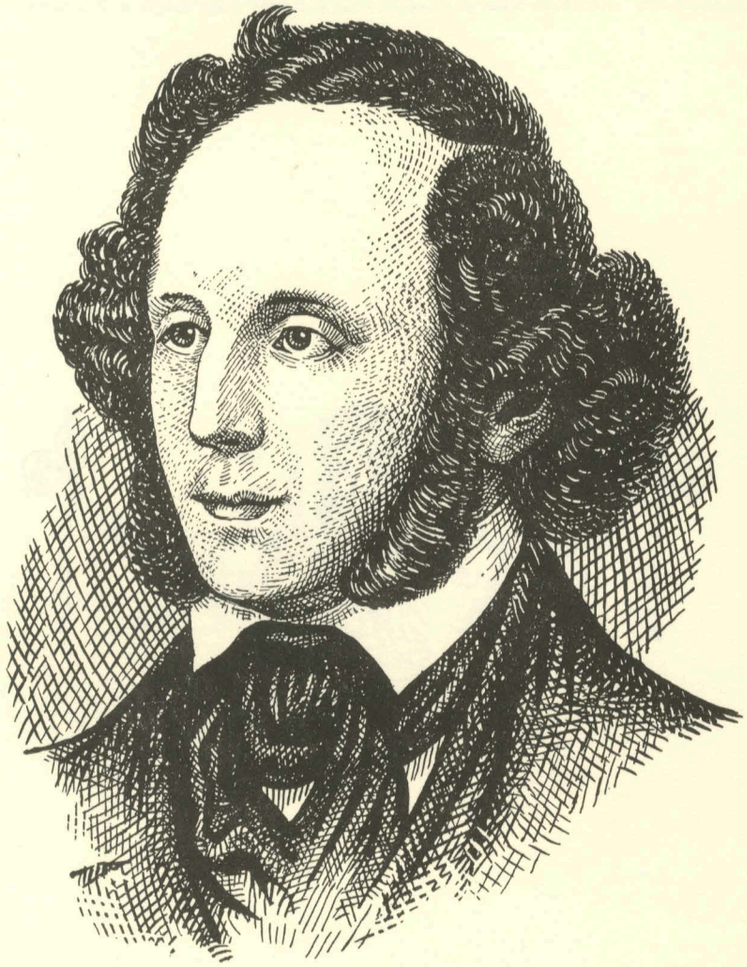

FELIX MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY

PROGRESSIVE SERIES COMPOSITIONS

Catalog Number 1018

SCHERZO IN E MINOR

Biographical Sketch—Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy

Born in Hamburg, Germany, February 3, 1809

Died in Leipsic, Germany, November 14, 1847

FELIX MENDELSSOHN was of pure Jewish extraction, being the grandson of the distinguished philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn. He was, however, baptized as a Lutheran Christian, and his given name was Jacob Ludwig Felix. His father was a wealthy banker in Berlin, and Felix started life with all the advantages that a refined and artistic environment could bring. His talent for music developed itself at a very early age, and when only seventeen he had composed one of his finest works, the exquisite *Midsummer Night's Dream* overture. He was the founder and the first director of the Leipsic Conservatory of Music, and in 1840 he was appointed director of the department of music in the Academy of Fine Arts at Berlin. The greater part of his life was spent in Berlin, Leipsic, and Düsseldorf, and he made long visits to England, where he was held in the highest regard. He aroused and stimulated interest in the works of the great Johann Sebastian Bach, of whom he was an enthusiastic admirer, and was instrumental in bringing several other musicians to the notice of the world.

Poetic Idea: In Mendelssohn's twenty-first year, he made a trip to England, appearing as conductor and soloist in London, and visiting spots of interest in Scotland, England, and Wales. His host in Wales had three charming daughters who were the inspiration of the three Capriccios, Opus 16. One of the sisters, describing the origin of these pieces, once wrote: "There was in my sister Honora's garden a pretty creeping plant, covered with little trumpet-like flowers. Mendelssohn was struck with it, and played for her the music which the fairies might play on those trumpets. When he wrote out the piece, he drew a little branch of that flower up the margin of the paper." Mendelssohn was fond of calling this Scherzo his trumpet piece.

At the first tiny trumpet call, the fairy chase is on. The hunt gradually becomes hot and furious and the uproar is quite fearful, at least for fairies. The din soon subsides and the fairy troop fades away into the night.

Form and Structure: Although many Scherzos are in Three-Part Song-Form, this particular Scherzo is constructed on a plan more closely resembling the Sonata-Allegro Form. There is a first subject in E minor (meas. 5-8), and a second subject in B minor (meas. 21-24). These are recapitulated, the first briefly (meas. 64; 66-67), the second completely in E minor (meas. 74-77). The first sentence with its four-measure extension runs to 12 measures (5-16); the second sentence with a 6-measure extension occupies 14 measures (21-34). The 5 measures of transition (35-39) following this are extended to 8 measures in the recapitulation (meas. 88-95). The second theme bears a family resemblance to the first, being obviously derived from the first three notes in meas. 8. The lyrical theme at meas. 70-73 is rhythmically related to the tune at meas. 25-26. This in turn is but an extension of the first four notes at meas. 7. Thematically, the Trumpet Motive (meas. 1-4) is of the utmost importance for it provides the episodes which unify the whole composition. It occurs in chords or octaves (meas. 62-63; 65; 68-69; 96-98), combined with frag-

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ments of the first theme (meas. 17-20; 40-47), and finally form the basis of an extended development in broken chords culminating in a *bravura* octave passage (meas. 48-61). An ethereal Coda in E major (meas. 99-108) brings the piece to a fitting close.

Interpretation: A delicately crisp staccato and great rhythmic precision are the outstanding requirements of this composition. Great care must be taken to pedal exactly as indicated. The pedal is utilized not only to emphasize accents but above all to enhance the tone coloring. Inaccuracy in the pedal releases will result in tasteless blurring.

Play the grace note B in meas. 7 as if it and the preceding B were sixteenth notes. The horn call in the left hand at meas. 30-31; 33-34; 83-84; 86-87, must be made rather prominent. The *crescendo* at meas. 48-53 must be very carefully graduated. The difficult repeated octaves in sixteenths at meas. 53-57, may be played as broken octaves beginning on the upper note. The octave E in the left hand at meas. 99 and 101 may be played an octave lower. The running passage at meas. 99-102 must be played with the very lightest of finger touches; the chords following with the most delicate of staccatos.

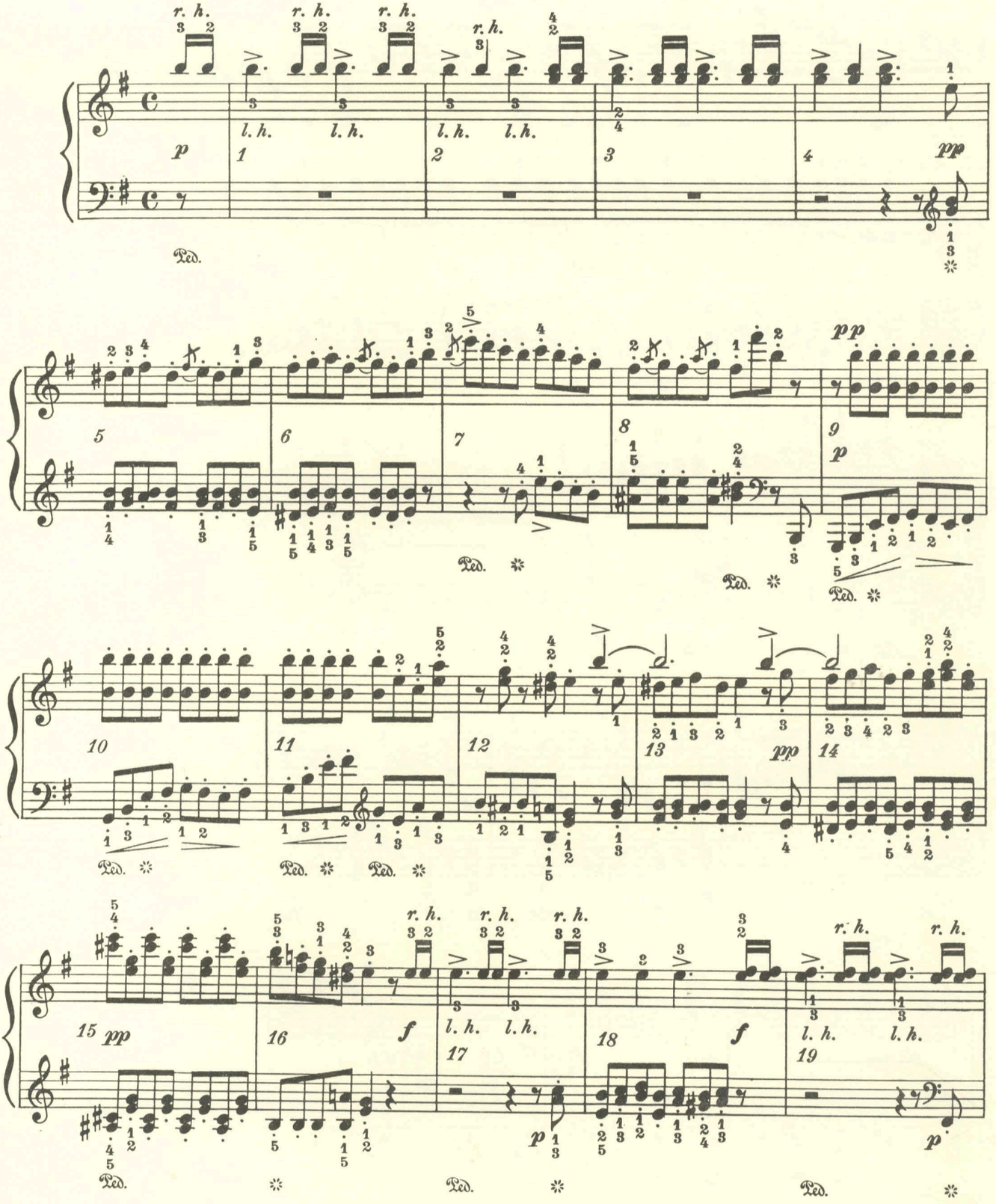
Glossary

bravura	pronounced	brä-vo͞o′-rä	(with much spirit)
cresc. (crescendo)	"	krĕ-shĕn′-dō	(gradually louder)
dimin. (diminuendo)	"	dĭ-mĭn-ū-ĕn′-dō	(gradually softer)
espressivo	"	ĕs-prĕs-sē′-vō	(expressively)
marcato	"	mär-kä′-tō	(with emphasis)
piu f (piu forte)	"	pē͞e′-o͞o fôr′-tā	(more loudly)
poco rit. (poco ritardando)	"	pō′-kō rē-tär-dän′-dō	(somewhat slower)
poco a poco cresc. (poco a poco crescendo)	"	pō′-kō ä pō′-kō krĕ-shĕn′-dō	(little by little crescendo)
Presto	"	prĕs′-tō	(rapidly)
Scherzo	"	skĕr′-tsō	(a piece of a lively character)

Scherzo

Edited by Ernst C. Krohn

Presto

F. MENDELSSOHN, Op. 16, No. 2

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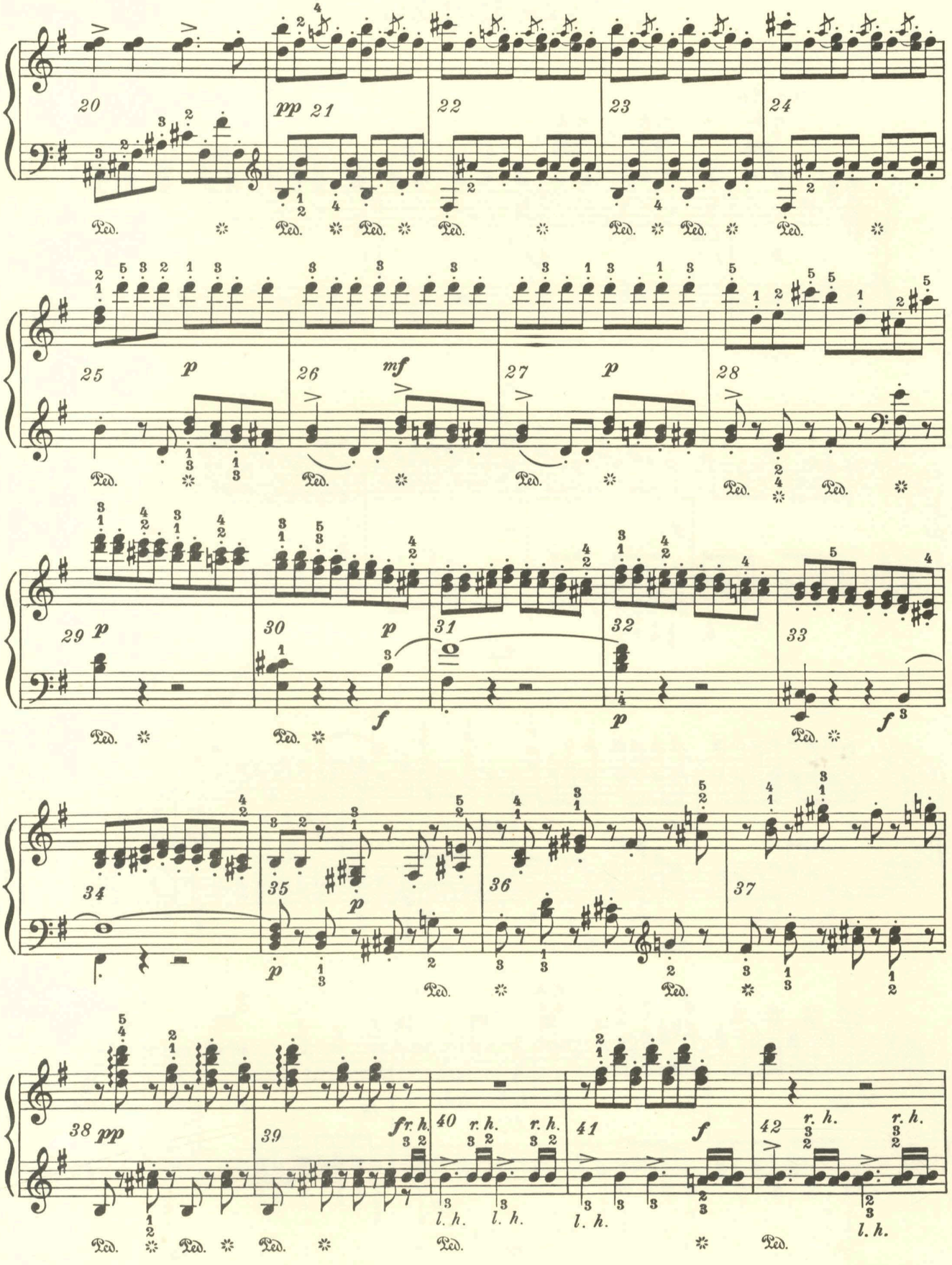
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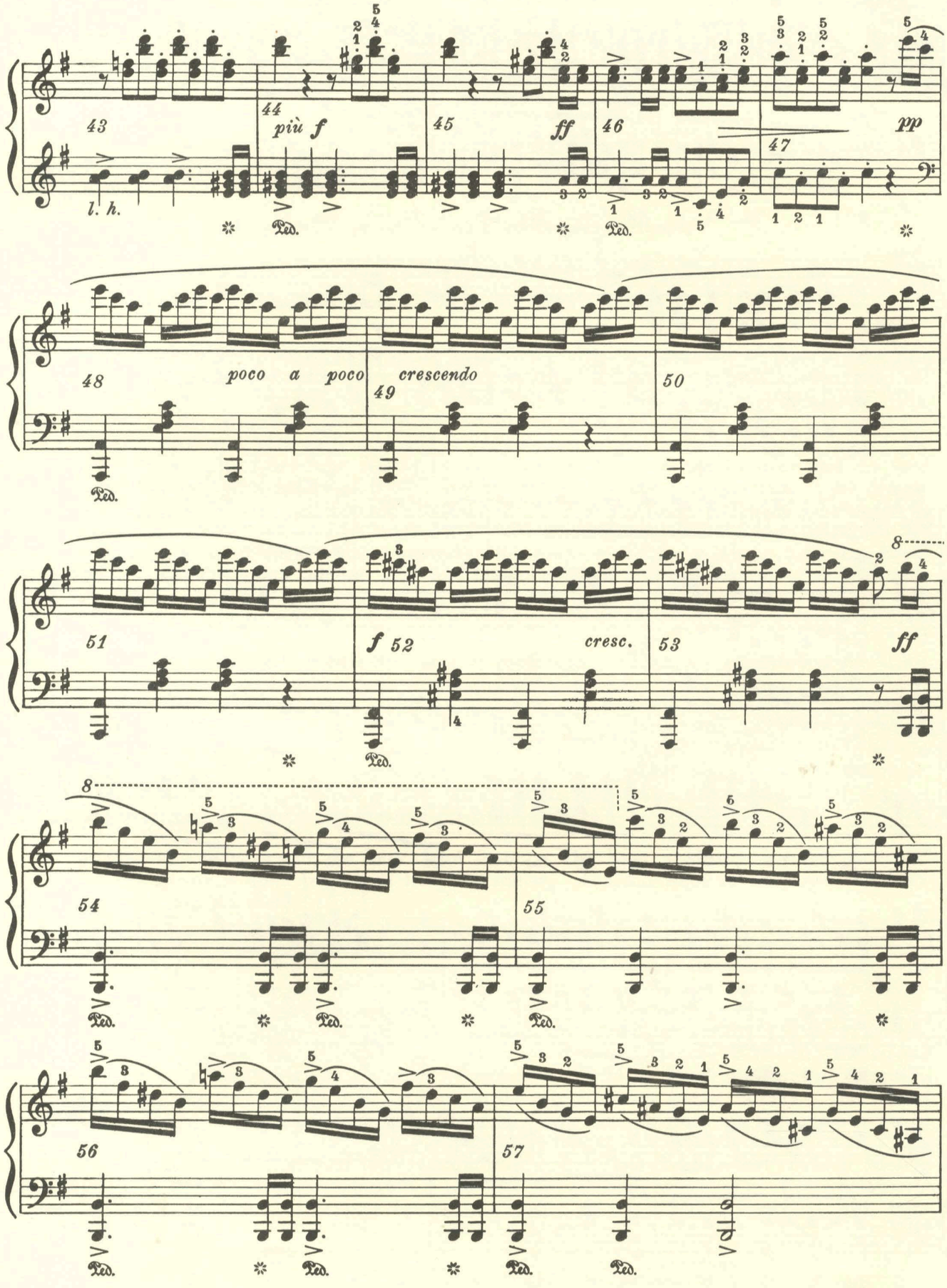
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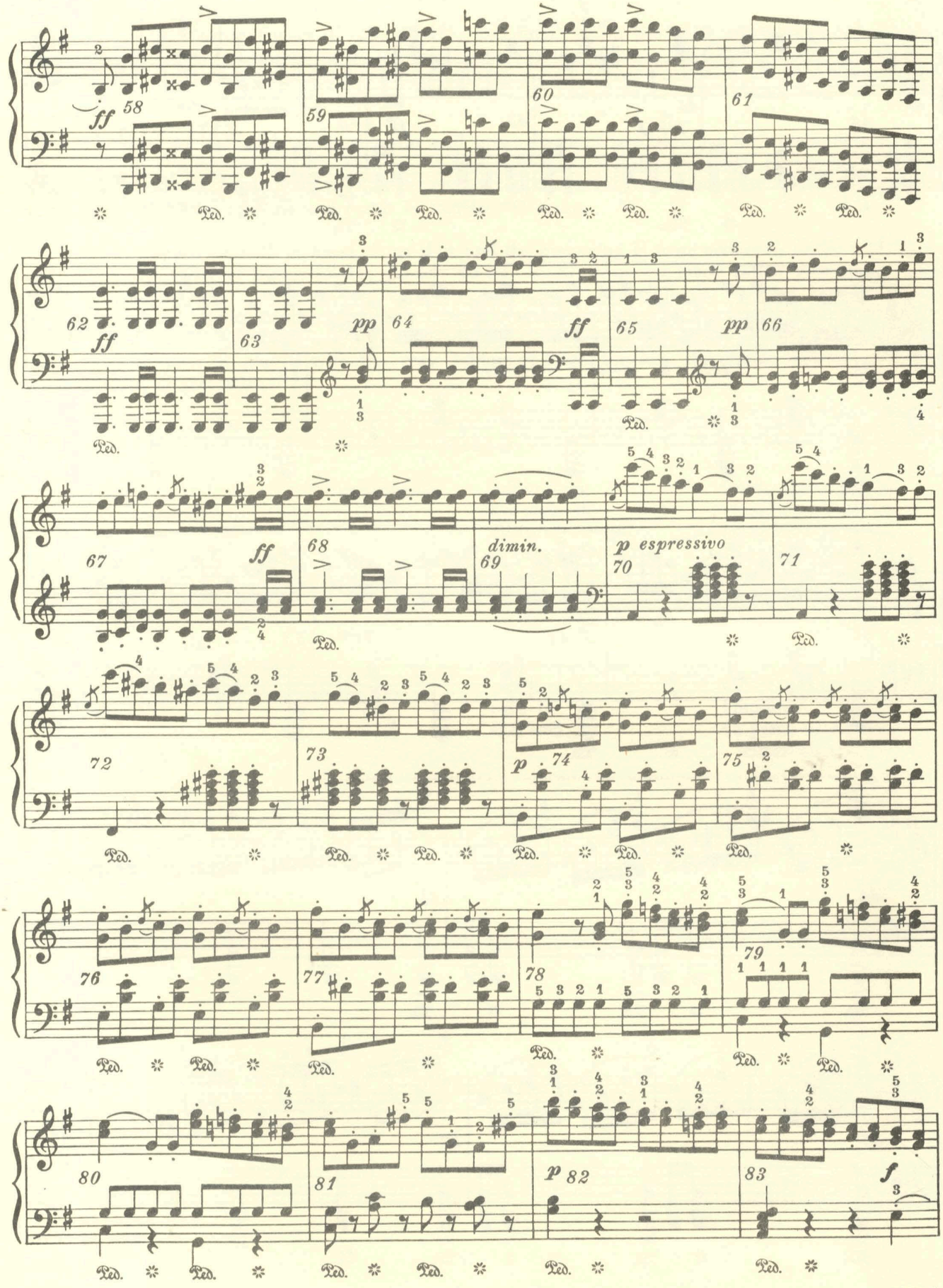
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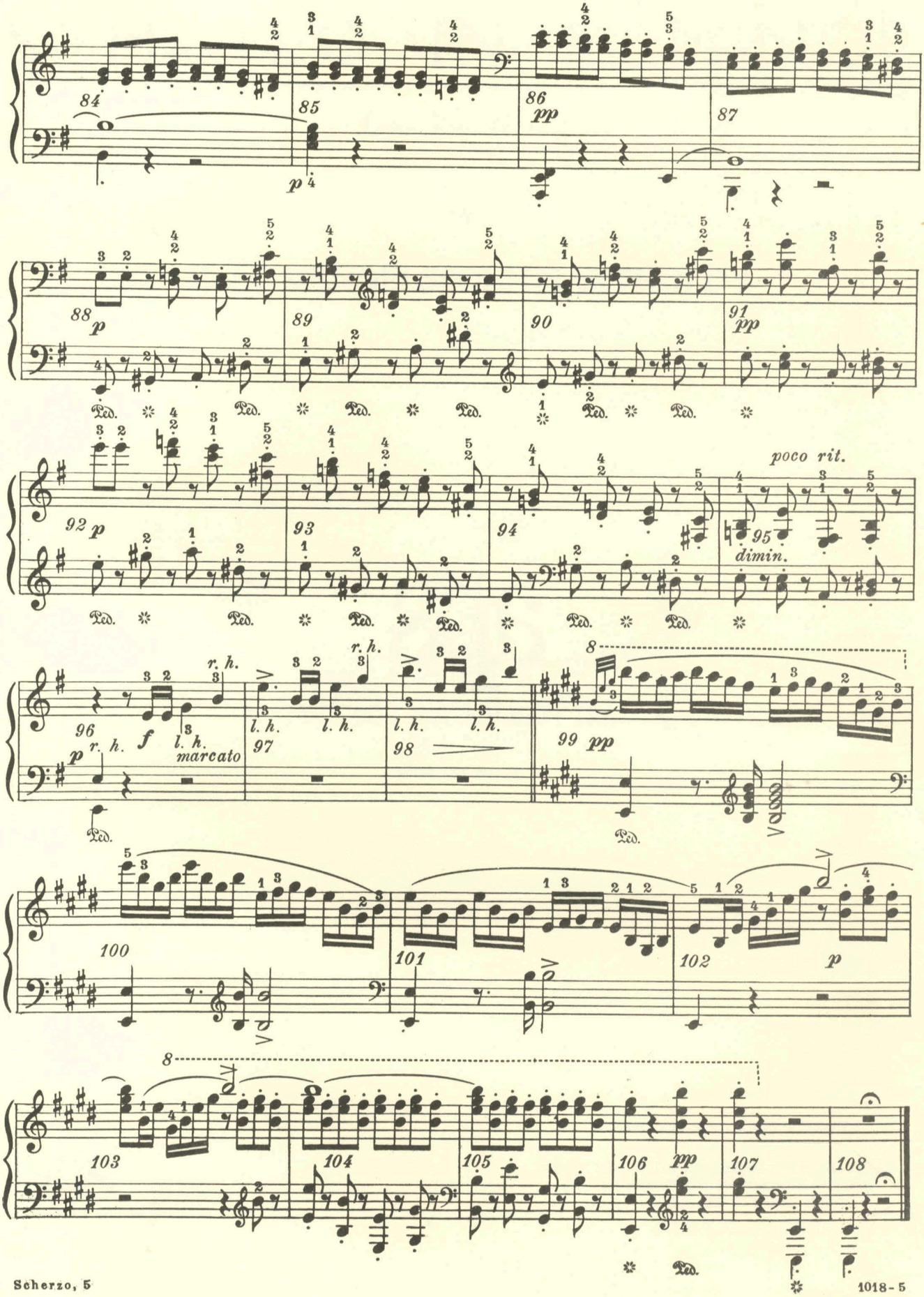
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